

## [Mrs. Laurence Erlach]

[?] Personal narrative (Jackson) S-241-DAK. DUP

### FORM A Circumstances of Interview

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE November 16, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 22

1. Name and address of informant Mrs. [?] [?] (Sarah) Erlach, Jackson Nebraska
2. Date and time of interview November 16 ,1938 10 A M
3. Place of interview At her home in Jackson, Nebraska
4. Name and address of person, if any, who put you in touch with informant J. J. Eimers, Dakota City,
5. Name and address of person, if any, accompanying you No one
6. Description of room, house, surroundings, etc.

Mrs. Erlach lives with daughters in Jackson, one a registered nurse. They live in a nice white cottage, facing the east. Their house is nicely furnished and very nicely kept. The day I interview Mrs. Erlach it was cold and they had finished cleaning house in the front part of the house, and we sat in the kitchen. They were remodeling the back part of the house, building on a pantry; they have a very nice "livable" home. C15 -2/27/41 - Nebraska

### FORM B Personal History of Informant

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

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DATE November 16, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 22

NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs [Tom?] [??] (Sarah) Erlach, Jackson Neb.

1. Ancestry Father, Michael McCormick Mother, Mary Thurlan
2. Place and date of birth Providence, R. I., about 1854
3. Family seven girls and five boys
4. Place lived in, with dates Providence, R. I. from birth until 1856; Jackson, Nebraska from 1856 to present time.
5. Education, with dates A good education for those days
6. Occupations and accomplishments, with dates Housewife [??]
7. Special skills and interests everyday life
8. Community and religious activities Member Catholic church
9. Description of informant Informant is rather a small woman, not fleshy, has blue eyes and gray hair; her eyes are always twinkling; she is very pleasant and glad to talk; can readily see a joke and enjoys a joke.
10. Other points gained in interview Mrs. Erlach is well liked and respected in here her community

FORM C Text of Interview (Unedited)

NAME OF WORKER Edna B Pearson ADDRESS 108 E 18 So Sioux

DATE November 16, 1938 SUBJECT Interview No. 22

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NAME AND ADDRESS OF INFORMANT Mrs. [?] (Sarah) Erlach, Jackson Neb

My parents came to Iowa in 1855; wintered in Dubuque and came to Nebraska in 1856, with Father Tracey's colony, in June. They came from Providence, Rhode Island. You know, he bought his stock in Dubuque, getting ready to come out here; he bought cattle and horses and different things to come out to this country. I was only a small, small child and can't remember coming out here. I was only about two years old. I had one sister and one brother. I have a flat iron that my father's people brought from Ireland and am wearing my great grandmother's earrings.

My father bought the farm where the Catholic Church in Jackson is; the convent stands on what was my home; we had 160 acres of land there; moved there in the fall of 1858. Martin Barrett, a bachelor, had land next to ours and east of our house Dennis Ryan had his homestead; he was no relation to Judge Will H. Ryan. The Twohigs came out here from the east.

It was hard on my parents when they came out here because they never used to do any hard work, like farming, as they had always lived in a city; it must have been terrible for them; they never saw an Indian until they came out here; coming from Duguque mother drove a team of horses and father drove an ox team; mother had never driven a team in her life until she came out here.

Where the convent stands father had a feeding yard for feeding cattle, and there was a well dug there; father always fed a terrible lot of cattle and hogs; my oldest brother helped him. The church and parsonage were on father's farm, but when they burned down the people claimed they were too close and moved them across the street. Father gave the land to all that church property.

We had horse teams and a double ox team; my folks brought out twelve thoroughbred fowls; they were speckled and had big bunches of feathers on top of their heads; I don't

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know what they were. At one time we had what they called creepy chickens; they had very short legs, and that gave them the appearance of creeping. It was quite a while after we came out here before we had pigs. Lots of families came here who didn't have a cow or chickens and had to live on corn meal just made with water.

I remember well when I saw steam boats going up and down by Jackson. Two miles north of Jackson used to be heavy timber; old St. Johns was just west of that timber, up in the valley; the old St. Johns cemetery is about a mile north, and just a little west, of Jackson. Jackson Lake used to be north and east of Jackson but they changed the channel of Jackson Lake so it emptied into Crystal Lake and now they farm most of what used to be Jackson Lake.

Mary Ann Boyle taught the first school that I went to, on the Simeon McGann place, just north of town; school was held in the house of a young man who had a farm and left it and went away; It was a log house made of hewed logs. There was a big table in the center of the room, with hand made benches around it; we didn't have desks like they do now. I went a year to school in St. Johns in a private house belonging to Father Tracey; Father Tracey had two nephews, young men, who were always at the head of everything; they went to school but were so much older then I was; they were his sister's sons.

We were never afraid of the Indians; sometimes there would be three or four hundred camped around our house, but they never, never bothered us a bit. They would camp around our house and would went to borrow hammers to crack walnuts. Of course they couldn't talk English but could make us understand what they wanted by motioning. Mother gave them whatever they asked for and they always brought it back. On the old Pat Berry farm, once the Indians got into a fight among themselves and the Berry family came down to my father's house and stayed all night. In the morning, when they went back home there were several Indians dead, with blankets around them, and hanging in the trees. They often had trouble among themselves but never bothered us.

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The Indians didn't kill Mrs. Benners, but I guess they scared her to death; she had a little infant and they came in the house while Mr. Benners was away and emptied the feathers out of the tick and she and the baby died from fright and exposure. She is buried on what is called the Horace Duggan farm. In those days it was the old Pat Moran farm, about one fourth mile west of Jackson.

My step-brother, John McCormick, was in Company I.

When we first came out here mother cooked in a fire place; I was quite a good sized girl when we got a stove. Now we use a fire place for style instead of to cook on.

When I was first married we didn't have white men for binding grain; had all Indians, and weren't a bit afraid of them. We always had them work on the farm when my husband lived.

I have made hundreds of candles. We brought our own cattle and didn't suffer like many others, because our folks were well fixed when we came here. Then as I grew up I helped my mother. At first we had moulds that made four candles; later six, and after a while made a dozen at a time. We would take the wick and twist it tight and double it; would put the loop end over a stick at the top of the mould and run the other end of the wick through the hole at the small end of the mould; would knot the wick at that end so the hot tallow wouldn't go through; would draw the wicks tight and then mother would pour in the boiling tallow.

Of course I forgot about the bread we used to have back east, because we just had corn meal out here, but we had plenty of milk and butter. We had nothing to feed the milk to, no calves, so had plenty of milk for ourselves. Mrs. Brennan brought us some white flour and I didn't know what it was; Mrs. McGinn made some biscuit out of the white flour and I didn't know what they were.

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Sioux City didn't have only one or two grocery stores; my father drove to Omaha for supplies. Once when father and Dan Duggan went to Omaha for supplies a blizzard came up and the snow filled the barns so the men couldn't find their teams. They had to shovel the snow out of the barn in order to get in and feed the teams; father know we were at home alone and walked from Omaha to Jackson. I was about [?] four or so and was standing in the door; we were so surprised to see father walking through the meadow in snow up to his waist; but he wanted to know that we were all right. Then he had to walk back to Omaha to got his team and supplies. Mr. Duggan stayed in Omaha and minded the team. That was about the second year we were on the farm. We had lot of cattle at the time of that blizzard. Mother went out and opened the gates and let the stock loose and they went into the swamp, and got shelter in the timber south of the house. That is all in farm land now.

Father never farmed much; he was no farmer; raised thorough-bred horses and lived on the stock and horses. Horseback was the automobiles we had those days. All the girls were good horseback riders and all had side saddles. I never had to walk because we always had lots of horses. When I was married and lived east of Hubbard I had a riding horse and buggy of my own but I never used the buggy. When I wanted to come to Jackson I would saddle my horse and ride up. My husband always had good horses. I always lived and an active life and always had full and plenty. We got right in with the new times.

We used wash boards; didn't have Maytags then. We never did work in the fields. The men put up hay for the cattle and horses by hand; the men mowing with a scythe and would rake the hay with a small hand rake like we use now in the garden. We always had plenty of hay.

They didn't raise much small grain. We had a small patch of wheat. The way they threshed was this: they would put some wheat on the ground and have a horse walk on it in a circle;

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then they would pick it up and fan it in the wind. Later they used a flail. Father brought the first reaper across the Missouri. He used to cut grain for a great many of his friends.

We have crossed the Missouri in skiffs, and have crossed on the ice. It was so cold those days that you couldn't break through. I remember when we have crossed the Missouri [?] in a skiff we would play with the water with our hands; we weren't a bit afraid. Then the pontoon bridge, we crossed on that and then they got a regular ferry boat, the "Undine"; it was nice to cross when we got that; we never looked for danger. It cost \$2.50 to cross on the ferry with a team; my husband has paid \$2.00 for a load and team.

When I was married we lived east of Hubbard for fifteen years and two years in the mountains, near Boulder City, Colorado, and came back and lived in Grand Island one year, but we thought of this place as home, and came back here. Father died in 1881 while we were away from here.

We used to have dances; father would have them for the families in the neighborhood and would see that they were run straight. We used to have big balls and dances and had good times.

This town used to be pretty big. We used to have horse racing and everything on Sunday. My father always had one horse in the races; just home peoplen people, no outsiders in the race; ran only for pleasure, not for money. I remember, I couldn't say the year, the Indians used to come up from the agency and dance their war dances for the whites here. When the country got settled up everyone would come in on Sunday to church and have a good time inthe afternoon, and then go back to their farms and work all week; they did that way regular. [?] My husband was a professor in Austria and came out here because his brother was a priest at St. Johns and wanted him out here so they could be together. My husband could speak and write eleven languages; he was county superintendent of schools in Dakota County in 1888 and 1889.